
ANTHROPOLOGY

At the end of this lesson, students are going to learn:

- What is meant by anthropology?
- The Origins of anthropology
- Who is the anthropologist?
- What are the main features of this science?
- Who are the pioneers of the field?
- How do Anthropologists do their studies?
- What are the main branches of the study?
- What importance anthropology has in general?
- What is the importance of anthropology in language teaching and learning?

REMINDER:

It has been said that ‘**Anthropology**’ is one of the social sciences which deal with the institutions and functioning of human society and with the interpersonal relationships of individuals as members of society.

1. What is Anthropology?

It is the study of **humans, past and present, to understand the full sweep and complexity of cultures across all of human history. Anthropology** draws and builds upon knowledge from the social and biological sciences as well as the humanities and physical sciences. **Anthropology** is a global discipline where humanities, social and natural sciences are forced to confront one another; it builds up **knowledge from natural sciences including the discoveries about the origins and evolution of Homo Sapiens, human physical traits, human behaviour, the variations among different groups of humans**: how the evolutionary past of Homo Sapiens has influenced its social organizations and culture.

2. The Origins of Anthropology

The term Anthropology originates from the Greek “anthrōpos” understood to mean humankind or humanity and logia (study). Early Anthropology originated in classical Greece and Persia, studied and tied to understanding observable cultural diversity. The field of Anthropology originated in the 19th and 20th centuries, after which Anthropology became a distinguished field of study

3. Who is the anthropologist?

He /She may refer to a professionally trained and qualified individual who is involved in the study and the application of origins, behaviour and the social, physical and cultural aspects of human development. Anthropologists are employed by government organizations, non-profit organizations, and educational organizations and may even work in disaster struck areas. They may work in deserts, cities, villages, towns, schools and even underwater archaeological sites.

4. Famous Anthropologists

- Alfred L. Kroeber 1876-1960
- Alfred Russel Wallace 1823-1913
- Jane Goodall 1934
- Louis Leakey 1903-1972
- Margaret Mead 1901-1978
- Ruth Benedict 1887-1948
- Franz Boas 1858-1942
- Claude Levi-Strauss (1908-2009)
- Eric Wolf (1923-1999)
- Lewis Henry Morgan (1818-1881)

5. How do anthropologists do their Studies?

They travel to every corner of the globe to conduct their research. The first generation of them in the late nineteenth century relied on the reports of travellers and explorers for their information. In the twentieth century, Anthropologists decided that such reports were not enough and that they needed to go and see for themselves. The modes of research that they initiated, designed to avoid as far as possible the pitfalls of prejudice, provide the basis of the modern discipline.

6. Branches (Fields) of The Study:

It consists of three (3) main fields:

- a) **Physical Anthropology:** It is concerned with: The influence of the evolution of the natural environment on the physical characteristics of humans; Human evolution (how modern Homo Sapiens evolved from earlier species).

NB: It has another name "Biological Anthropology".

- b) **Cultural Anthropology or Socio-cultural Anthropology:** It is the comparative study of the manifold ways in which people make sense of the world around them. While social Anthropology is the study of the relationships among persons and groups, Cultural Anthropology is more akin to philosophy, literature and arts. It is concerned with:

- The attempt to understand other societies in terms of their cultural symbols and values;
- The archaeology or the remains of extinct civilizations that left no written records;
- The organizations of the preliterate societies.

- c) **Linguistic Anthropology:** It is a mixture of linguistics and anthropology. We find it with another name: "Anthropological Linguistics". Linguistic Anthropology is the comparative study of ways in which language reflects and influences social life.

Linguistic anthropology is the study of how people use different languages to interact with each other. It also involves the study of how language plays a key role in defining a particular culture. How did languages change over time? What language do people prefer at home? What types of languages are spoken in the world? And, so on.

Its main concerns are :

- It seeks to understand the process of human communication (verbal and nonverbal), variations in language across time and space, the social uses of language and its relationship with culture.
- It explores different ways in which language practices define patterns of communication, and formulate categories of social identity and group membership.
- It equips people with common cultural representations of their natural and social world.

7. Characteristics of Anthropology

Anthropology is a distinctive field of study and perspective on humanity. It is characterized by the following elements:

- **Holistic:** Anthropology seeks to explore every facet of an issue or topic, making it inherently interdisciplinary.
- **A global perspective:** Anthropology compares cultures to make generalizations and develop theories that apply to all societies at all times and places.
- **Evolutionary:** Anthropology seeks to discover the origins of humanity and human institutions, and how people and cultures change over time.
- **Study of culture:** Anthropology explores the learned and shared bodies of knowledge that humans have developed to adapt to their environments.
- **Biocultural:** Anthropologists study biological as well as cultural factors, seeking to discover relationships between “nature” and “nurture.”
- **Fieldwork:** Anthropology relies on gathering information through extended periods of intense empirical investigation, which include observation of behaviours, excavation of artefacts and interaction with the peoples of the world.
- **A natural science, social science and one of the humanities:** As the anthropologist Eric Wolf said, it is “the most scientific of the humanities and the most humanistic of the sciences.”
- **Respect for human diversity:** Ruth Benedict, one of the founders of American anthropology, said the mission of anthropology is “to make the world safe for human differences.”

8. The Importance of Anthropology

- To teach humans how to look outside of themselves and realize that what we think and what we believe are not the only ways to think and believe.
- Anthropology is the only science that emphasizes the comparative approach and comparing things across different cultures.
- To show people their perspectives of the world and how they are controlled by their experiences; because no one can experience everything.
- When people look at other people’s experiences, perspectives and understandings, their knowledge becomes greater.
- The focus of Anthropology is on understanding yourself about others (past and present)

9. The Relevance of Anthropology to Language Teaching & Learning

Anthropology is an adventure. It offers students the opportunity to explore the worlds, where lives unfold according to different understandings of the natural order of things. It is argued that cultures should be taught explicitly in the language classroom; both teachers and students should become amateur anthropologists; exploring and testing their own and others’ cultures. The language classroom should be the neutral territory between two cultures, where cultural attitudes and patterns can be freely disputed.

The use of an anthropological approach to language teaching enables students to gain communicative as well as linguistic competence and provides interesting and relevant content with which to practice linguistic structures.

The teacher acts as a kind of ethnographic researcher, leading students in the investigation of social issues that affect their lives using methods such as participant observation and interviews. Involvement of this kind would strengthen the teacher's role in the school and society, and introduce students and teachers to first-hand local knowledge. It would boost the role of teachers as agents of social change in their communities.

Teachers could lead students in researching the history of their city or town, the tangible and intangible heritage and local customs. These results could then be built into the subject matter of English language classes, or into relevant parts of history courses.

Using anthropological understandings of race, gender and class can give room for a more inclusive education that avoids cultural determinism and gives more attention to culture s a set of inquiries, skills and language. With this idea, teachers can consider ways to encourage students to be individually active and informed in response to social change and crises such as wars, forced migrations and their long-lasting effects.